



TRANSCRIPT

Episode #: Title Pending

TRACY BOWERS *from* ORGANIZE SIMPLY

WELCOME

TASHA: Welcome to the Get Organized HQ podcast. I'm your host, Tasha Lorentz. Every week we share practical strategies for less stress and more peace as we dive into all topics, life and home organization. I'm so glad you're here for this week's episode.

TODAY'S GUEST

Welcome back to the Get Organized HQ podcast. I am really excited and motivated by today's episode, and I think you are going to be too.

I have Tracy Bowers from Organize Simply as our guest today, and I just asked her if she would answer some of the frequently asked organizing questions that I found online.

A VARIETY OF TOPICS

I pulled a list of them and we just went through all sorts of different topics, whether that be decluttering sentimental items, organizing in small spaces, organizing a pantry, maintaining an organized space.

Tracy has been a professional organizer for over a decade. She has so much experience and so many practical ideas.

GET MOTIVATED

And I'll tell you what, these are questions. I've

heard a lot of these questions before, but some of Tracy's answers, I had never heard these answers before.

And I personally, after our conversation, am feeling so motivated to go tidy up and organize my own space. I know you're going to be feeling the same way. So listen in.

WELCOME TO TRACY

Well, Tracy, thank you so much for coming on to the Get Organized HQ podcast today to just kind of rapid fire answer some of these frequently asked organizing questions.

TRACY: Okay. Glad to be here. Can't wait to answer them.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

TASHA: Yeah. So I just, you know, did what any good researcher would do. And I got on the Internet and I was like, what are the most frequently asked organizing questions? And pulled these up.

And so these are probably things that you've either heard before or heard people discussing before.

ANSWERS FROM A PROFESSIONAL

But you're a professional organizer. And so I thought, let's just go through some of the things that are top of mind for a lot of people,

whether they're looking to declutter their home or organize a specific space.

A lot of these touch on, maybe problem areas that come up when organizing and decluttering.

And I know that you have seen a lot of spaces. Like if you had to pull a number out of the top of your head, like a total estimate, how many spaces would you say you've organized?

NUMBER OF SPACES ORGANIZED

TRACY: I don't. Oh, a lot. Because I might. I became an official business in 2014, but I've been organizing since 2000, you know, so that's.

That's a lot of years, you know, thousands of spaces.

TASHA: Yes. So you have seen it all. So, yeah, we're just going to go through this list. I've got about nine questions here. And see, from your experience as a professional organizer, what would you say?

Whether it was just like a friend sitting down with you asking this question, or if it was a client you were working with or something like that.

SMALL SPACE, LIMITED STORAGE

So the first question I have here is, how do you organize a. Either a really small space, or it could be a big space that has really limited storage.

ONLY KEEP WHAT YOU LOVE

TRACY: Okay, well, I will share some tips with

you on that, on how to utilize this space well. But I first need to make a point with this. So, often, you know, you hear, oh, only keep the things you use and love. Okay, you know, you hear that a lot.

ONLY WHAT FITS COMFORTABLY

Sometimes you can't keep everything you love because there's not space for it. So you need to only have what fits in your space comfortably.

And so if you only have room, if you have a tiny closet and you only have room for 20 shirts, but you have 50 that you love, then how do you make it fit? How do you make it fit?

LET SOMEONE ELSE LOVE IT

You don't make it fit. You keep your 20 favorite and donate the rest and let somebody else love on those.

In America, you know, we only use 20% of what's in our closet, typically. And so you think, well, I might use it someday, you know, and, no, if it doesn't fit and it's cramped, it's going to be so hard to keep things organized.

RV EXPERIENCE

No matter how big, how small your space is, you only want to store what fits comfortably. If it's a closet, you want to be able to slide the clothes back and forth.

And we really don't need much. I know my husband and I had to live in an RV for a couple weeks, and we had just the basics that we needed, and it was wonderful.

It's like, you know what? We could live like this forever.

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WE DON'T NEED SO MUCH STUFF

Why do we have a house full of stuff? And that's just what we do in America. You know, we have space, and we fill it to the brim. And so, you know, if you have a small pantry, go shopping more often. You know, don't cram your pantry.

People say, oh, I want to utilize this space well. You know, I'll organize their pantry. And there's space. And they're like, well, let's put in a few more containers. You know, it's like, we're not utilizing this space. It's like, you don't need any more containers.

LESS IS EASIER TO MAINTAIN

You don't have any more stuff. I don't want you to go out and buy more stuff just to cram in your pantry. So space is nice. And so I just have to make that point.

I mean, that's the biggest point I can make today. And the less you have, the easier it is going to be to keep organized.

USE VERTICAL SPACE

TASHA: For sure.

TRACY: Okay. But if you're trying to utilize that space and it's really tiny, you want, you do want to fit as much as you can comfortably, and you can do that by using your vertical space.

You know, first of all, often we have wall space that we can add hooks to, you know, or, if in cabinets in the homes that we organize, almost always, I mean, probably 80% of the time, if we're in a kitchen, we go and have more shelves made.

ADD SHELVES IN CABINETS

Because the typical house, you know, you have your, your three shelves in your cabinet. Well, you can lower the shelves, utilize that space. You could add one or two more shelves. Sometimes you can add three, and then things aren't stacked on top of.

You're able to just grab things comfortably, and see everything comfortably. So adding shelves wherever you can is huge. It's huge. That's, I think, the biggest thing that we do, and that our clients are thrilled.

MAKING AIR SPACE FUNCTIONAL

It's like, okay, there's no more room, but look at all this air. How can we make this air functional? And that's adding shelves. That's.

TASHA: I love that because I haven't really heard, like, you know, I've heard about the, like, okay, put an over the door hanger for your vertical space or something.

I don't know that I've heard people recommend, like, no, just go put more shelves. You already have.

DIY TIPS

TRACY: It's huge. It, I mean, it makes such a difference. And I just, I hadn't seen anybody, any organizers do it on Instagram. And I, you know, I just went to, had my husband cut one for me.

Luckily, I do have a handyman, you know. Right. You can do these. But then I went to Lowe's and just brought in a shelf one time and they cut it for me. It's like, wait, you cut, you cut them? And so now mid job, you know, custom. More custom ones Dan has to do.

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HOME IMPROVEMENT STORES

But, some basic shelving, you can just go to Lowe's or Home Depot. You buy the wood, you bring your shelf in with you and say, can you, can you cut it so they don't make little small cuts, you know, so if it's like, oh, it just needs to be cut, you know, another inch, they may not do it.

But as long as it's a big enough cut and they have certain things they have to deal with. But so often they cut them for me.

So I really suggest if somebody's looking to utilize a space anywhere, if there's room for a shelf and you have the peg, you know, the holes form, you buy the pegs there and don't forget the pegs and you buy the shelves.

Makes such a big difference.

TASHA: Man. I love that.

EXTRA SHELVES OVER STACKING BINS

TRACY: But then again over the door, you know, of course. And your vertical space, wherever you can.

Stacking bins, you know, it's like I hate to stack too much. Yeah. But that's why the more shelves come in handy.

TASHA: Yes, that's such a great idea. So practical.

TALLER CONTAINERS

TRACY: And another thing you could do is, often containers, you know, are wide instead of a 4 inch wide container, you know, get it. Or an 8 inch, get a 4 inch that's taller to help use that

space.

And that's why containers inside a cabinet and inside a space help. It keeps things contained and it brings them up often to fill, you know. And that gives you more space too. So much more space.

THE RIGHT PRODUCT IS IMPORTANT

TASHA: I've definitely noticed that in my own pantry, how many like little things I have in the pantry and if I can put them in a container, well, like it's a little bit easier instead of being like, well, I'm going to set my one thing of cinnamon here and my one thing of you know, ranch seasoning mix here.

And before you know it, you've pretty much got a paper thin layer of everything on a shelf.

TRACY: Right? Yes. That utilizes this. And the right, the right product is so important. So important.

AN EXAMPLE

And we just organized for a family who just moved in and the mom said, I bought tons of containers, you don't need to bring containers. Well, the containers were all the same size, you know, 12 by six acrylic containers.

And it's like if you're going to utilize space, if you really need to utilize space, you can't just have a bunch of random containers. You have to have containers that really fill that space that efficiently.

SIZE OPTIONS

We like bins from the container store that they come in eight different sizes. So, you know, if

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you have a little bit of something, you put it in a little bin more, you know, if it's wider, you put it in a bigger one. They have two different depths. So it's either an 11 inch deep or a 15 inch deep. And then it's four sizes within those two depths.

And those are perfect. I mean that really, really helps you utilize the space when you use that right product. And I can share the link with you to, the products that we use as a professional organizer.

TRIED AND TRUE PRODUCTS

And I've used everything out there and the, I only post products that we actually use on jobs that we have found to be efficient and the most cost effective. So I can share those with you if you want.

TASHA: Definitely. We'll put a link to those in the show notes because finding something that comes in multiple sizes like that is. That is impressive.

It is not a small piece. So many nice bins out there. It's like. Well, it comes in two sizes. So if you don't want.

UPDATED BIN OPTIONS

TRACY: Most of them are. And, and I have to tell you, this particular bin, they are remaking, so it's going to be a little different.

But for now we have this one and they have another one coming, probably in November real soon. But it's generally the same thing. The 8 size is what you're looking for.

TASHA: Yes. Awesome. Well, we'll definitely link to that in the show notes.

HANDLING PAPER CLUTTER

So another question that came up was, what do you do with paper clutter and specifically handling lots of papers to shred?

START AT THE MAILBOX

TRACY: Okay. I never have lots of papers to shred. Be number one, because I open. This is a huge tip. Everybody should do this. I think as you're walking from your mailbox, don't even walk into your house.

I don't even walk into my house even. It's been snowing and I'm over at my mailbox. I going through my mail and I immediately throw in my recycle bin all those things that I could care less about.

Just toss, toss, toss, toss, toss the things that have my name on it. If, you know, if I'm uncomfortable, I rip it right then rip it, rip, rip, rip, and throw it in the trash can.

KEEP THE ONE IMPORTANT PAPER

And then I come in and. And once I go through the mail more is I throw away. I mean, I take everything out of the envelopes, throw away the envelopes because they do everything online.

Throw away all the inserts, throw all that away. So all I have is that one paper. When I'm done with that, I rip it up right then and throw it in the trash can.

So I have a shredder that I never use. The only time I use it is if I'm doing a big purge in a filing cabinet that I don't even have much in anymore.

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OPTIONS FOR SHREDDING

You know, So, I mean, there's companies, if you're, if you're starting, if you have a lot of paper, you know, there's like shredded. There's lots of companies where you could take it to and safely do it.

You know, even places like Kinko's and you know, there's so many places that do shredding safely that you can feel comfortable about. But, or get your own shredder. You know, you could do that.

THE #1 CLUTTER IN HOMES

But definitely get rid of those papers. That is, that's the number one, clutter in people's home is paper. We just have so much coming in from our kids first day of school.

It's crazy, you know how much paper and things that they bring in. But you want to have a system for your paper as well.

SYSTEMS FOR PAPERWORK

So if you have you know, a cabinet somewhere where you can put vertical, sorters in it. If you have tons of things going on, lots of kids, lots of papers that are coming and going all the time that you need access to instead of having them spread on your, on your desk.

Filing cabinets often don't work. I find for most people it doesn't work because you're not going to take the paper and file and oh, I'm going to look at my box.

LONG TERM VS ACTION PAPERWORK

People don't do that. The files are good for long term papers. You know, have them put

away. But action paperwork that you're working on, you need to have access to it. It has to be easy. You have to see it if you want to keep it organized.

VISIBLE STORAGE SOLUTIONS

So even, they call them literature sorters. They're wooden. You know the wooden cubby systems where they have like 12, 24. Have that set in a desk or somewhere.

Use a binder clip. If there's nowhere to label, use a binder clip and then put a label on the binder clip and you just clip that on each of the, the little cubbies to label it.

LABEL EVERYTHING

But label the things that are, you're working on. If you have multiple projects, have a cubby for each of them.

If you have four kids, have four for each of your kids, have one for the school papers, your school papers that you have to go through and see and reference, you know, so just say school papers.

If you have, you know, something for work, papers that come in or mail that comes in that needs to go to husband's office or somebody else's office.

FIND WHAT WILL WORK FOR YOU

Whatever those papers are, write them down, think, okay, I always have this paper coming in, you know, paperwork for this coming in and then decide how many cubbies you need and go online and buy something.

And even if it's just individual sorters that you

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stack on top of each other. Game changer. Game changer.

And one thing here, right on my desk. I'll show you. I love these because, like, okay, I have a sorter right here.

PROJECT FOLDER SYSTEM

People always say, oh, when I can't see it, I'm gonna forget about it. You know, and so if you put it in this, I can keep a project in. This is gramsies. This is all of, my grandma's information that I need to reference.

So it's multiple things. It can be multiple sizes. I can have a card in it. I mean, like, let me look. Sorry.

TASHA: Is that a document cover or a poly envelope? I can't quite tell.

TRACY: It's what?

TASHA: Is that a document cover or a poly envelope? I can't quite tell.

TRACY: It's a. It's just a.

TASHA: Just like an open. Yeah. Polyester. Almost like a folder type thing. Yeah. I don't think I've seen that exact thing before.

TRACY: A project folder. Okay. And so it holds it down at the bottom, but then it opens up.

MULTIPLE SIZES CONTAINED

But what's great, like, see, these are coupons. I can have multiple different sizes, and they're not all over my desk. You know, you can have multiple sizes in one thing, so it's all contained.

And then, you know, these few projects that I'm working on, I just keep in a vertical sorter on my desk for the projects.

And then it's not all over my desk, but I can quickly just thumb through and just see everything. I see the papers, and as you can see, I labeled it as well with a sticky note. But that is a great way to keep control of your paper.

EASY TO FIND & PUT AWAY

TASHA: Yeah, definitely having a place to put it so it's not all spread out so that, you know, if you're looking for a coupon, you know, go to your little coupon folder.

If you're looking for something with your grandma's paperwork, you know where to look for that and also knowing where to put something away.

Like, if a coupon you want to use comes in and you already have the folder set up, that's how you prevent it from living on the kitchen island for a couple of days.

EASY TO CHANGE OUT

TRACY: Exactly. And I always have a few of these project folders just sitting in my sorter as well. So it's like, if I have to add to it, I do. And what's great is when one project's done, you just toss it and you put something else in it.

TASHA: Exactly.

TRACY: So. So. Awesome.

WHAT HAPPENS TO DECLUTTERED ITEMS?

TASHA: Yeah. Well, the next question that I have actually is about the process of working with a professional organizer. So, this question was, what do professional organizers do with items I don't want?

So I think what's being asked is, if you're working with a client, and you come across, you know, all these things to declutter, like, what happens with all that?

Does the client take them to a donation center? Do you all haul them off? Like, where do they go?

TAKING IT AWAY

TRACY: All right. Different organizers are different. I'm fortunate. I have a couple nice big vans. So we always take everything away. We don't want to leave anything with the client.

They're. They're. People hire us because they're overwhelmed. So if we leave a pile, it may not be taken away, and they may still be overwhelmed. We want them to feel like it's done.

WHAT THEY DO WITH IT

So we take all the cardboard to a recycling center, and all the donations to local donation center.

And then if they know they're going to have a lot of trash, we ask that they have a dumpster. We don't take the trash, but we make sure there's a dumpster there.

So when we leave, the house is empty, free of clutter and any mess, any trash, any junk, and it's done, you know, which is, I feel like a great service that we're able to offer because we have

the means to do that.

IF YOU'RE DOING IT YOURSELF

But if you're organizing for yourself, it's so important to take those things out of your house.

And often, so often people say, well, I want to find somebody who can really use this, or, I want to save this and give it to my sister who's back east, I'll have to, you know, I'll wait till she comes and.

Oh, you know, I just. I hate to just give this away. Let me just. I just. I just can't just give it away. Right.

YOU'LL MAKE SOMEONE'S DAY

You have to remember that whoever. If you just give it to a local donation center and you can't, you know, sometimes people are so picky about which one, too, and it keeps you from doing it.

But just know that. That no matter who you give it to, the person who purchases that item is going to be thrilled. It was, too. It was super expensive. You know, you may think, oh, but it was so expensive.

IT DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERSONAL

You are going to make somebody's day that they're able to purchase this item. Somebody is really going to appreciate it. And it doesn't have to be your aunt back east.

It doesn't have to be a, quote, friend, you know, personally. It doesn't. You know, and you have to get that out of your head. Because so many people hold on to things because of that.

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CLIENT STORY

And I had one client who was just insistent that she find a specific person for all of her stuff. And so she put sticky notes. I mean, I have to do what the client wishes. I tried it, you know, this way, but it's their decision.

And so we just. Sticky note, sticky notes, sticky note, sticky notes, sticky note, Piles, piles of her stuff.

And, you know, I went to her regularly when I was in California, and she every time I came, there was always those piles, still piles, piles. And it's like, just let me take it away. And you'd have this whole space, you know, so let it go.

Just let it go and know someone's gonna appreciate it.

WHEN THE JOB IS DONE

TASHA: Yes. And I, know with so many things, there's, whether it be guilt or just kind of uncomfortableness with, like, getting rid of a lot of things, I think that just kind of biting the bullet, so to speak, and doing it, getting it out of your space.

Like, now you have the fresh start, now you have the space. Now you can say, okay, what do I actually want in this space? Let's be intentional about what's coming back in all of those things.

But really, like, the job isn't all the way done until the stuff is out of the space, right?

TRACY: Absolutely. Absolutely. So let it go.

KEEPING CLOSETS ORGANIZED

TASHA: So one space that I know a lot of people struggle with, or maybe like, one of those first spaces people even go to if they're thinking, I need to declutter. It's clothing and closets.

And that is one of those spaces that stuff comes in so easily. And so what is your advice for keeping a closet organized long term, and not just, you know, for the first week or month after going through it?

HAVE LESS

TRACY: Well, I'm, going back to your first question, obviously.

TASHA: Yes.

TRACY: Is to have less and only have what, what fits comfortably in the space.

If there's things you just don't want to get rid of, you just can't do it. But they don't fit you right now, fold them and put them in a bin under your bed or in a storage room or in a garage. Get them out of your closet.

ONLY KEEP WHAT YOU USE

So only the clothes you're actually using regularly, all the time, you love them, you use them, they fit. You only keep those in your space. I guarantee if you do that, you're not going to have a hard time keeping it up.

People have a hard time keeping their closets tidy because there's too much, you know, and they're looking for things, and things pile on top of each other because you're trying to find things.

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And that is why you can't keep your closet clean. If it's only the stuff you love, it's going to stay tidy.

CLOSET TIPS

Of course, you know, a few tips is you want to have categories together. You want to fold things the same way.

Pants, if you have, shelves that you need to set some folded clothes on, always use pants because they hold their shape and aren't so messy.

If you have shorts or leggings or things like that that have to go on a shelf, keeping them in a bin keeps things tidy. Again, it gives it the side so you can use that height and you don't even have to fold them and it still looks tidy.

But just make sure everything is labeled. You know, designate a place for everything. And then, you know, have them labeled. Use baskets, bins.

USE CONSISTENT PRODUCTS

Of course, consistent hangers are always nice. It just, they hang the same. It looks nice. When your space looks good and feels good, you feel good.

And so you always want to do as much as you can to make it look beautiful. And it doesn't have to be expensive product. It just has to be consistent product, and it has to be what fits in your space.

CHOOSING HANGERS

So, I mean, we use beautiful wood hangers. They have all the different types of woods, and

it's beautiful, but it's more expensive.

You can get some wood hangers cheap at Ikea even, or, I like, if you need really slim. You're trying to utilize this space. We hate the velvet. Hate the velvet.

Some people like it and it's fine. We feel like it pulls, on your T shirts and stretches out the neck and they shed. They often break.

AFFORDABLE OPTIONS

But there's rubberized ones and they're on my website as well that come. They have the hangers, skirt hangers that go with them as well.

And they're rubberized, so they're super thin and they're really inexpensive. You know, it's like.

And if you can't, if it's still expensive for you, just buy one box at a time and gradually. Just have a goal to do it gradually.

Yeah, that makes a big difference in your closet.

STORING CLOTHES TEMPORARILY

TASHA: Yeah, absolutely. And like what you said at the beginning, getting it down to what you're actually using right now, even if that means you are storing some things under the bed or somewhere else.

I have found that really helpful for me, if I'm a little afraid to go all the way, maybe with some clothes. And, like, am I really ready to donate them.

But going ahead and taking them out of my closet and saying, okay, we're going to put

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these in a pile over here for now.

Like I mean we just said. Right. Am I going against what we just said? Get the piles out of the house. Right. But I've totally done it. Like put them in the pile out of sight.

TRY A TEST PERIOD

Maybe it's under the bed in a bin. Maybe it's in a closet, like a different closet somewhere. Wait three months, wait till the end of the season and see if you even remembered it was there.

And it kind of lets you test out living with less. And my guess is most of the time you're going to love it.

TRACY: Right. Never look back. Yeah.

THE GIFT HAS SERVED ITS PURPOSE

And I think there's people who, they're afraid to get rid of things. I want to tell you one more thing too. They're. They're afraid to get rid of things, because.

LETTING GO OF GIFTS

Well, I, had two thoughts. Let me tell you the one that I keep forgetting to tell you.

Sometimes people have a hard time getting rid of things because it was given to them. And they have to remember that it was the act of giving. That was the gift.

Somebody gave you something, it made you feel good that they gave it to you, that they thought of you, that it was so thoughtful. And they feel good that they were able to give that to you.

So bam, you know, it's been accomplished. The gift has been accomplished.

RELEASE THE GUILT ABOUT GIFTS

They are not going to expect you to hold on to it forever because they gave it to you. There are some people that say my mother in law is going to ask where is that? Where is that?

They want to see that you've, you know, that they've used it. But in most cases no one's gonna know.

And if you're not using it, you don't have to feel guilty at all. You know, they don't want to this the gift to create clutter or cause chaos in your home that would hurt them. They want to know you're happy.

MAKE SOMEONE ELSE HAPPY

So you loved it, it felt good, it was wonderful. Now you're going to give it to somebody who will really appreciate it because you don't really use it.

And then you're making somebody else happy. And that's the cycle it should be going through. It shouldn't be. Well, I have to hold on to it because so and so gave it to me.

So get rid of that gift. And now I forgot the other one I was going to share. But it'll come.

SENTIMENTAL ITEMS

TASHA: That's fine. Well, that actually segues perfectly into the next question that I had, because it was about, what do you do with sentimental items? Which I think gifts fall into that. Photos was another thing that was mentioned.

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It's really hard, especially I think, if you've been making a ton of progress. You know, you've been decluttering, you've gone through your bathroom, you've gone through your pantry and kitchen, you've gone through the toys, like, all of the. The clothes, like, the easier to declutter things.

And you can have that kind of tension of. I really want less. Like, I don't want all of this sentimental stuff, but this is way harder stuff to sort through and to make decisions about.

IRREPLACEABLE ITEMS

And I think one of the scariest things is how irreplaceable so much of it is. You know, like, if I'm in my kitchen and I'm like, wow, this is a tool made for slicing avocados, and I've never, ever sliced an avocado with it.

And if I become a guacamole chef who makes it all the time, I can go buy another one for, like, 10 bucks at the store. It won't be hard.

But if I'm going through sentimental items, you can have something that's very replaceable — a mug, a T-shirt, a piece of jewelry — that, like, it's not worth anything as the item.

THE MEMORIES

But you come to it, it's like, well, if I get rid of this mug, I can never get the mug I drank out of at our wedding back. Like, I can get the exact same mug, but it's not that mug.

So I think that's where the hang up is. And how do you approach that?

A PROFESSIONAL'S STRUGGLE

TRACY: Okay, so I hate, hate clutter. I don't

like knickknacks. I'm very minimal. But when it comes to my sentimental items, you know, things that my kids have made or done, even my grandma, my grandma who's passed, it's like, oh, I hold on to those items.

They mean so much to me, and I have a really hard time. I have a really hard time. So. But this is the deal, okay? Because I love. Because I love these items so much.

STORAGE SOLUTIONS

We had an attic space in our garage. My husband created an attic space in our home in California. And just for my memories, for our kids' stuff.

So every time we filled a bin, I just threw it up there. Another bin, threw it up there. Well, when it was time to move, we now live in Utah, when it was time to move, I went up there.

And I'm like, oh, I don't want to move all this. What am I gonna do? What am I gonna do?

TIME TO DIGITIZE

So it's time to digitize, like I tell all my clients to do, even though I'm not doing it. It's hard. There's so many other things in life that take precedent.

And it's not until something like moving where it's like, okay, I have to do something. And so we pulled all the items down.

I have five kids. Each of my kids had, like, at least 10 bins of stuff. I mean, it's terrible. It was a lot.

Tracy Bowers

TAKING PICTURES

And so we brought down my daughter's, and she came over. She wasn't living with us anymore, but she, we went through it, and we just took pictures of all the things that meant so much to her, and she was totally fine.

At the end of the day, we just had piles of stuff to toss or to give to donation. And she's like, okay, I'm good.

MAKING THE BOOK

She says, let me make the book. You know, you can hold on to it till I make the book. And she had a book made at Costco, 20 bucks, you know, easy.

And we took the pictures with our camera. All we did was set up a sheet. Since then, I have all these nice things to make it nice. But just a sheet and a Costco book.

KEEP IT SIMPLE

And it had all her pictures. You don't take the time to put it in order, what grade, what or when, or have to write in it. If you do that, it will not happen.

You have to just say, I'm just going to throw it in a book. And then with a pencil, I can write notes in it later. But at least we have this book.

LETTING GO IS HARD

And so, when she told me, the book's made, it's done, throw everything away, I was carrying piles to the trash, and I started sobbing.

It was really, really hard for me. And it's like, she made this skirt, you know, in junior high. How

can I throw that away?

And I called her, and she's like, mom, I don't care. I have the memory. Throw it away.

So I threw things away, and I cried the whole time. There were a couple things that I pulled out that I thought, well, I could use them somewhere and have that reminder.

NO REGRETS

But most of the things, I threw it away, and I cried the whole time, and I have not looked back.

But what, you know, what's awesome, is now she has this coffee table book that you can thumb through, and her kids look at it, oh, mom, you made one like I did. And she goes, yeah, I was your age when I did that.

Mom, you made this. I didn't know you could color. I didn't know you did ceramics. Her kids are enjoying it. If it's sitting in a bin, are they going to enjoy it?

No. No one's ever going to see it.

KEEP ONLY WHAT MATTERS

And you may think there may be those couple special things that you save for a funeral, that if this person passes, I'm going to want to display this, you know, one small bit.

You don't need 10 boxes of school, you know, even the school papers and things. It's like, you only want their written things that came from their heart. Who cares what their spelling test was?

What did they write? What were they feeling?

Tracy Bowers

Those and that's so few that are really like that. The rest can go.

IT'S EASY TO GET CLINICAL

TASHA: Yeah. So I love how personal that is because I feel like so many times it's easy to almost get clinical.

Like, okay, well, like, sentimental clutter is hard, but we approach it the same way as our other clutter. And so here's the process.

YOU'RE NOT BROKEN

But to hear your story, that, like, it is hard, it is emotional, you're not broken. That this is a hang up. It's a hang up for a lot of people.

But being able to hear that, like, you did it, even crying while you did it. But that you're still glad at the end of the day that you did it.

Don't regret throwing. Because I think that's the fear, is that, like, if I throw this away, I'm gonna regret it.

But you didn't have to move 20 bins of things.

IT'S WORTH IT

TRACY: And once in a while there will be something that you think, why did I get rid of that? That will happen. Yeah, it might, you know, chances are it could happen.

But if you say that about one item, you know, and you. But you got rid of hundreds of things that have just given you so much peace. And is it worth it?

Yes. Yeah, yeah, it's worth it.

DECLUTTERING THE KITCHEN

TASHA: For sure. For sure. Yeah. No, I absolutely love that. So moving on to a slightly easier topic of decluttering. What about decluttering a pantry or kitchen effectively?

And I think with this question, like, food honestly can create a lot of clutter. It's not something that we typically think of as clutter.

And then you get really, like, man, it's one thing if I went to the store and I bought seven pairs of pants that I never wore because, you know, I thought that I was gonna wear this specific style of pants.

And then I decided I hated it on my body or something like that. But like, that's a little different. But like, what do you like?

BULK ITEMS FROM COSTCO

Okay. And I mean, you mentioned Costco. I feel like I love Costco. I love getting things from Costco. I do not love that. If I try something new and I don't like it, I now have an open box that has 23 more granola bars in it because I only ate one of them.

BE REALISTIC

TRACY: Right. Okay. So as far as a pantry, first of all, when we come in and do a pantry, a typical pantry, we have a team come in and it takes us a seven hour day.

So if you're doing it by yourself, you know, you see, oh, pull it all out, you know, and then sort and then get the baskets and then do that.

If you're trying to do that yourself, that's going to be a nightmare. You're going to pull it all

Tracy Bowers

out, your kids are going to come home, you're going to throw it back in and you're not going to accomplish anything.

ONE CATEGORY AT A TIME

So you really need to think clearly about what you are capable of doing, how much time you have if you're doing it on your own. So you want to do one category at a time is what I suggest you do if you don't have a team coming in and doing it for you.

And so you may say, today I'm just going to, going to work on the snacks and you pull out all the snacks in all the different places, you get rid of the cardboard, and you know, you poured in simple baskets.

GET THINGS OUT OF BOXES

Even if you don't have the money or the means or you don't have time to shop if you're getting them out of the cardboard.

Just simple, you know, dollar store baskets to start are fine just to get things out of their boxes because that gives you so much more space.

But as you're doing this process, if you come across things that you know your kids aren't going to eat, you can donate your food as well.

DONATING UNWANTED FOOD

Food pantries love it. It has to be a sealed container. But if, if you don't like those granola bars, those individual granola bars are sealed, right?

So you start creating a pile and you give to your local food pantry and they'll take food, you

know, usually up to two years old, sometimes even longer.

So if, and I, and I've had people say, that's so rude, why are you giving them your old food? And it's because they want it. You know, instead of it going in the trash, give it to somebody who's going to be thrilled and appreciate it.

OLDER FOOD IS SAFE

And if you feel. I mean, I kind of have a phobia because of things, my childhood memories, you know, I have a phobia of old food. And so if it's old, I just can't get myself to eat it. But it really isn't bad. It's not going to hurt you.

It may not have as many nutrients and things in it, but typically it's not going to hurt you. And that's why food pantries take it. It's fine, it's good. It's calories, you know.

START FRESH

So when you're cleaning out your pantry, I really suggest to start fresh. And if there's foods you haven't used, you know you're not going to use them.

You probably don't want to use them, but you don't want to throw them in the trash, put them in a bin, in a box, and take them to your local pantry.

So do that as you're doing it, but start with one category at a time. And then, you know, the next time, work on all the breakfast foods. Decide what cereals you use. You know, start fresh. So do one category at a time.

IT'S JUST GOING TO GET OLDER

And get rid of those foods that you're not.

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That, you know you're not going to eat, or if it's a little old and you've been hesitant about it, you're still not going to eat it.

You know, it's time. Just.

TASHA: It's just gonna get older.

TRACY: It's just gonna get older. So it's like you toss or donate if it's able to be donated. And that's gonna make a big difference.

LESS IS EASIER TO ORGANIZE

But that's really gonna help. Like, with any organizing space, the less that's in there, the easier it is to keep up, the easier it is to see what you have. And just to stay organized.

TASHA: Absolutely. So with all of this organizing and decluttering, what are the routines that you would encourage people to kind of adopt into their life to help maintain it?

AFTER ORGANIZING, WHAT'S NEXT?

So whether that be cleaning routines or organizing routines or tidying routines, like, what does this look like? I guess kind of after you leave, you and your team have come and organized, like, what's next?

TRACY: Okay, well, two things. Once a system has been set up, and there's things are labeled, there's a specific home for everything.

REALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

When you have a busy life, kids coming and going, it is not going to stay perfect and beautiful just because you organized it. Reality, it's not. I'm an extremely organized person.

But when I had five kids, we had to go to soccer practice, then to piano, and we had homework and things got dropped, things got dumped.

Doesn't matter how organized you are. And, if you care about your children, they're going to come first. You know, you don't have issues. It's going to. Kids come first.

SYSTEMS MAKE IT EASY

But because a system has been put in place, when it's time to put it away, you'll be able to do it quickly. We used to have something called Operation Cleanup when my kids were young that my husband did.

Because when it got so bad, it was out of control where, I mean, it, it was bad if it started bothering my husband. Okay. And he would say, this is ridiculous.

OPERATION CLEANUP

And he'd scream, Operation Cleanup. And no, no Attention, Operation Cleanup. So he'd call attention and the kids knew they had to run if he said attention. And he would crank on the music and he'd, usually turn on Boston, but he'd start blasting it.

And the kids knew it was time for Operation Cleanup, but they didn't mind it because it was fun. He made it fun. And for 10 minutes we had all those hands, you know, seven people, 14 hands going at it for 10 minutes.

KNOWING WHERE THINGS WENT

And we would just pick up, run and put away. Pick up, run and put away. But because my, there was a place for everything in our home, our kids knew where to put it. We weren't

Tracy Bowers

scooping it and putting it in a basket and throwing it in another room.

You know, the kids weren't piling it up. They pick it up and say, oh, I know where this goes. And they'd run and put it away. And they only could take, you know, two items at a time to make sure it got put away.

So having systems set up, you can quickly put things back together. And you just need to remember that that's why systems are so important to have.

TASHA: Yeah. Being able to know where things go. Right.

TRACY: And I was going to share something else and I can't remember, but what was your question again?

TASHA: What, like cleaning, organizing routines help maintain the organization.

A LIFE-CHANGING STORY

TRACY: Okay, I'm just full of stories today, but I can tell you a life-changing story that happened to me.

My mom went through, had a lot of stress in her life. There was a time where just things were chaos. And I go to a friend's house and their house was just so tidy and clean all the time.

And I just loved the feeling that I felt, I loved just that it was so tidy. And clean.

NOTICING A TIDY HOUSE

And I asked this lady once, and I thinking of the time period, I must have only been like 10 years

old, maybe 11. But I remember asking, your house is always so clean. You know, in our mind, it's just clean.

Your house is always so clean. When I grow up, I want my house to always be clean like this.

PUT THE HOUSE TO BED

And my mom was very clean. It was just cluttered, you know, things built because of stresses. But, I wanted it to be like that. And she says, Tracy, the one thing I can tell you, and you listen to me.

And she's like, you put. You do this, and you will always have a tidy home. And she says, before you go to bed, no matter how tired you are, you go around and put your house to bed first.

ROUTINES MAKE A DIFFERENCE

And I promise you're going to wake up in the morning and be so glad that you did it. And if you make that part of your routine your entire life, you're going to thank me because, that's what I do to help keep my house clean all the time.

You have to have a routine, you know, and hers was putting the house to bed before she went to bed, which I try to do.

YEARS LATER

And I think about it, you know, I'm 60 years old now, you know, that happened when I was 10, you know, 50 years ago. And I look at clutter and things on the counter. It's like, I just need to put it to bed.

I know it's late, so the house is dark and quiet, but I'll run around and pick up or finish some

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dishes, clean things up, and then that starts your day fresh. And that's, game changer.

HELPING THINGS STICK

TASHA: Yeah, and I love, like, I love little catchphrases like that, right? Like, it really helps it stick in your mind.

Like, it's one thing to say, like, oh, well, you should tidy up your house every day, but it's so much easier to remember, like, okay, put the house to bed before you go to bed. So I love that. That's really fun.

FAVORITE ORGANIZATION PRODUCTS

So we kind of touched on this one already, in some of the other questions. But another question that came up was, what are the products or tools that work best for home organizations?

So you mentioned those Container Store bins that come in eight different sizes. Are there any other containers or products that you found that just, like, in a lot of the projects that you see, like, this is probably going to be a winner?

DRAWER ORGANIZERS

TRACY: So drawer organizers, you know, the individual acrylic drawer organizers are a must.

We use that in almost every room in every house. And then these bins that I was talking about, you know, I make sure I am stocked on those because if we have nothing else, you know, those are the main ones.

EVERYTHING BRAND

And the drawer organizers, I just need to tell

you, we like the ones from the Container Store, the Everything brand, because that's their brand. So it's cheaper than another brand that they offer.

And they're great, they're fine. You don't need the metal on them, you don't need thick plastic. You just need something simple. So, that brand is great. And it comes in eight sizes, which is really nice.

LIMITATIONS OF AMAZON SETS

But you know, one container is like \$6. And if you get the Amazon ones, they're like a dollar fifty, you know, so Amazons are cheaper.

But the problem with the Amazon ones is, you have to buy multiple sets to get all of the sizes that they have. And they don't offer, the 3 by 12 size anywhere in any of the things on Amazon.

HARD-TO-FIND SIZES

I've looked everywhere. Only the Container Store brand, or I Design brand have the eight, eight sizes. And so, you know, things like a, you know, a kitchen drawer, we're going to use that 3 by 12 size.

Yeah. And I don't want to have to buy a million different sets and then have piles of something we don't use very often. You know, so that's kind of the bummer with it.

PLAY & SEE WHAT WORKS

But if you're just doing a few drawers at home, you know, buy a set of each, kind of play with it and see. Because if, if you're on a budget, the Amazon ones, you know, they're fine, they work great.

Tracy Bowers

It's just having to buy them that way is kind of hard. Or you can buy them individually.

BUY WHEN ON SALE

And when I, when we do drawers, I say buy a huge stack of each one when they're on sale. Often they. Right now at the Container Store, they're 25 off this week.

I don't know when you post this if they would be on sale. Yeah. But they,

TASHA: They do sales periodically.

TRACY: They do lots of sales.

RETURN THE EXTRAS

And so you wait till they're on sale and you buy a big stack of each size and then you just return the sizes you don't use because you're playing musical canister constantly because you want individual organizers for each thing.

People sometimes they say, oh, they're going to organize and then they get these organizers who are that, they already have slats and things in them.

INDIVIDUAL ORGANIZERS

They stick it in the drawer and then they just pull plop things and it's like, well, what's. What's the purpose of it?

You know, when you have an individual drawer organizer, you're like, okay, the stapler belongs here. You're not sharing it with anything else. You're not sharing it with the same container as your keys.

Your keys have their own. The stapler has their

own. Pencils have their own. The pens have their own, the sharpies have their own.

EVERYTHING IN ITS PLACE

So everything has its own container. If you have gum, you know, their own container, then you know this is their home.

It's not where it belongs. It separating it just randomly. There's no purpose in that. And things just get put on top of it.

BIG CHANGE IN YOUR HOME

Drawer organizers in every space of your house. Drawer organizers or drawer dividers. And then you get those bins and, big change in your home.

That's all you do. Huge.

TASHA: I want to go. I'm like, ready to go to the Container Store, get some. Drawer organizers, redo my kitchen drawers. Like, I'm so motivated now.

FLATWARE

TRACY: And even for your flatware, you know, they have organizers for your flatware. We never use that because it's limiting.

You don't want things that limit you. You want the individuals. How much. How many forks do you have?

Some people have more. How is your drawer situated? You might want to turn it this way instead of that way.

CUSTOMIZE FOR YOUR THINGS

Yeah. So you don't want to buy products that are limiting, that already have dividers, that already have it set up for you.

You want the individual ones, and you customize it for your things and for your drawer.

TASHA: Yeah, I love that. No, it's like, seriously, I'm like, okay, I gotta go redo my. Redo my silverware drawer now. So that's awesome.

TRACY: I'm glad. It's so fun, too.

WHERE TO START WHEN OVERWHELMED

TASHA: Yes. Well, the last question I have, and I know this is a really common one that I hear come up often, is where do you start when you feel overwhelmed and don't know where to begin with organizing your home?

ONE SECTION AT A TIME

TRACY: You want to start small. You know, people think, oh, I'm going to tackle my closet like we talked about, or your pantry.

You just do one section. So what's bothering you the most? And don't tackle the whole thing. Tackle one section.

SMALL CATEGORIES

Yeah. If it's your closet, say, today, I'm going to just pull out all my jeans. Or if you have tons of jeans, start with the smallest category you have.

I only have this many T-shirts. I'm going to

just go through all my T-shirts. I'm going to fold them. I'm going to, you know, put them on a. Create a place for them on a shelf or in a drawer.

WATCH AND FOLD

I'm going to watch a YouTube video or Tracy's videos. I'm going to offer my videos for free, to people who watch this of, my, it's normally I think 30, \$35, but I show all the things and how to fold them.

But watch a video on how to fold things and say, I'm going to just fold my T-shirts today, go through and make sure they're all that I keep. So start small.

START WHERE IT BOTHERS YOU MOST

If your kitchen's overwhelming, you start in the junk drawer. Get some drawer organizers. Just start that out.

Or just your baking. One simple category. Something. Walk around your house. What is just driving me crazy.

Maybe it's a desk that has piles of stuff on top of it. So if you're like, I can't, I can't deal with it. It's too much. Just pull all the little things off of it, you know, that belong in different places of the house.

JUST A LITTLE BIT HELPS

You know, barrettes, you know, a spray bottle, a thing. So it's like, okay, I have this big pile. I'm gonna put all those things in a basket that I can walk around and put around the house because it does not go on the table.

And you'll still have papers and other mess. But

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just having that little bit away from it, you'll be able to stack the papers neatly and it'll look better.

FOCUS ON ONE THING

You're not going to have time to put all of it away and to file all your papers and to go through all your papers, and that's why you don't do it, right?

But if you say, I'm just getting rid of the bulky items that don't belong on this table, that's something you can do.

And even if you don't have time to put all that away, put that basket on the stairs and know when you go upstairs, you're going to take it and start gradually putting things away. So little project. Start small.

LESS STRESS, MORE PEACE

TASHA: Yes. Well, this has been so good, so much good and practical information. I have one last question I ask all of our guests before we wrap up any podcast episode.

So what is one thing that is giving you less stress and more peace right now?

So that can be like an actual item that you've been using that's been a game changer, or it can be a routine or a habit that you've implemented. But what's something giving you less stress?

MOTIVATED TO EXERCISE

TRACY: Oh, you caught me at a time I have had such a hard time exercising. You know, running my own business is very time consuming.

When I had five kids at home, that was very time consuming, you know. And I did work as well, for, you know, a lot of the hours of the day. So it's like I'm really busy.

Exercising is just. Hasn't been a priority for me. Yeah. But I turned 60 in April and just have gained weight and the flat was like, oh, I just need to be motivated.

FAMILY GROUP CHAT

And my, my son started a family group chat for those who wanted to participate on where we can talk each week about our exercise and our eating habits and stuff.

So that's really motivating. So now I have to answer to my family every week. And so I have been exercising.

And there's times that I thought that I would normally say I need to, oh, I need to post on Instagram because all my business comes from Instagram. I have to post.

MAKING HEALTH A PRIORITY

And so that was such a priority. And I, there's days people who follow me know I am not posting as much and it's because I'm exercising.

But I'm so glad, you know, I feel so good. I'm so proud. I feel, feel better. I feel stretched out and it's making me want to eat better and I just feel better.

What's made a big difference for me the last couple months. Excited about it. You caught me.

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CONNECTING WITH TRACY

TASHA: It sounds like you're doing great. That's wonderful. So, where can people go to hear more from you? You mentioned that you're on Instagram a lot.

INSTAGRAM

TRACY: Yes. Yes, you can follow me on. My company is Organized Simply, but our Instagram is Organize with Tracy.

Okay, so go to Organize with Tracy. And I share constant tips. I take you into our homes and show you what we do, why we do it, the products we use.

I share the products. So that's a good place.

STOREFRONTS

And then, on our link tree on there, I have my Amazon storefront and my Like to Know It storefront, where I post.

You know, I share posts and the products we use from the posts, on those websites and so you can find them.

FREE ORGANIZING VIDEOS

TRACY: And you mentioned those organizing videos. Where should people go to find those? I'm going to share a link because if they went to my link tree it would cost them. But I'm giving it to you for free.

TASHA: Awesome. Well, I will put that in the show notes, so anyone listening in can go check the show notes to see those organizing videos.

WRAPPING UP

Tracy, thank you so much for sharing your time with us today. This is awesome.

TRACY: Thank you.

Well, thanks so much for tuning in to this episode of the Get Organized HQ podcast. Tracy mentioned some videos that you can get access to if you go check the show notes.

There's a link there where you can purchase those videos for Tracy's organizing videos and also other links that Tracy mentioned as well.

So be sure to check the show notes and I'll see you back here for next week's episode.